

CARE WORK AND THE ECONOMY

Advancing policy solutions with gender-aware macroeconomic models

Care Work and the Economy (CWE-GAM) & Levy Institute Intensive Course

Session Brief: Day 1, Africa Timezone

“Overview”: Instructor- Maria Floro, Facilitator- Paula Herrera Idarrága

Course overview: This section included a schedule of the course, reminder to stay on top of readings, attendance expectations, and a tip to use Slack workspace as a discussion platform.

The lecture was broken into three main sections:

A. **Concept of Gender**: The concept of gender is shaped by social norms and shows how biological differences between females and males are interpreted by society. Gender is a social construct that has a historical evolution, embodies power relations in society, and permeates economic life.

B. **Economics as a Socially Constructed Discipline**: Economics was a creation of predominantly men which reflected the way they came to think about economic life. Thus, its development was influenced by interests and biases of these dominant thinkers. The neoclassical ideas of the ‘Rational Economic Man’ who is a rational, autonomous individual and ‘Rational Choice Theory’ are largely based on a narrow perspective of economic life. This leads to economic policies and development strategies that primarily represent the interests of certain groups while excluding others.

C. **Development of Feminist Economics (FE)**: FE incorporates women’s voices and experiences to challenge standard or accepted concepts and assumptions. It transforms the way of thinking about economics or the provisioning for day-to-day living. FE draws from many traditions, rejects the self-interested, autonomous economic agent, acknowledges power relations and intersectionality of gender, puts human well-being at the center of economic success, emphasizes importance of care and unpaid labor in developing human capabilities, focuses on process and outcomes, and accepts ethical judgements as valid and inescapable for economic analysis.

Discussion Questions:

Feminist economics aim to promote a more inclusive economics. This includes a recognition of the crucial role of macroeconomic policies in shaping the conditions for provisioning of livelihoods and well-being.

- 1) To what extent are conventional macroeconomic policies gender-biased and therefore can yield negative impacts on women?
- 2) What challenges do you foresee in doing research on gender-aware economics, including gender-aware macroeconomics?

Discussion after Breakout Rooms:

Melissa Langworthy: While we are all from different backgrounds, there are similarities in a disconnect in the concept and place of women in policies. Additionally, the availability of data, how is data collected, and issues with data are all vital for this analysis.

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Lorena Valle Cuellar: 1. Global south data availability is a problem, specifically, disaggregated data so gender research is hard. 2. Political agenda challenges- the importance of feminist economists, advocacy groups in educating and pushing gender-based policies and data collection. 3. Women are needed in leadership roles in order for this to happen.

Izaskun Zuazu: difficulty of collecting data, to what extent do we want to monetize all aspects of the economy (unpaid work), underrepresentation of women in economics

Zenzi Pahl: feminist economics is seen as a soft science so there is a lack of respect and hard to be taken seriously (Charles), economics is genderblind which leads to gender-unaware policies, sometimes there is unintended gendered consequences (not purposeful) from these policies (Nkechi).

“Gender Relations in Households”: Instructor & Facilitator- Paula Herrera Idarrága

Learning objectives:

- Reflect on the explanations for the gender division of labor in households
- Understand what determines the bargaining power of women and men within households

Topics:

- Feminist critique of New Household Economics (NHE)
 - o Becker’s model of the Unitary Household, comparative advantage, specialization and division of labor
- Household Bargaining power

Key Concepts:

- Allocation of time between market and nonmarket work
 - o Relative productivities – but what determines them? Do wages reflect productivity (when there is discrimination?).
 - o Pareto efficiency doesn’t help with equity
- Unitary household?
 - o “Benevolent” dictator - Altruism in the home vs. self-interest in the market
 - o Empirical evidence – different preferences
- Beyond the Unitary model – bargaining models
- Intrahousehold interaction – cooperation and conflict
- Fallback position – determinants of bargaining strength
- Norms determine bargaining power and what is contestable (and not)
- Structures of constraint – Household, community, state

Discussion Questions:

Think of a situation where the woman needs to bargain to improve her situation:

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- What structures of constraint or external constraints (household, community, market, or State) are more relevant for defining the outcome? Order from highest to lowest relevance.
- The order would change depending on the context? Why?

Think of an example where the structures constraint counteracts and another where they reinforced each other.

Discussion after Breakout Rooms:

Chandni: order is context dependent (education, marital status, social status)

- Within household: Income and assets matter and if the household is in an urban/rural environment
- Within community: Marital status, labor, children, type of family, head of household?
- Within state: cultural influence within state, religion

Melissa: we thought about the decision to go back to school.

Order:

1. Household/ 2. Social Norms: decrease in HH work- opinions and preferences of spouse/family, childcare availability?, other in HH/community to take up duties, future income higher
3. Market: flexible time from workplace, capacity to get improved job
4. State: workplace protections/anti-discrimination policies

Monica: decision of a young married woman with young children wanting to go back to work

- Household: who expects women to go back to work
- Community: social norms and pressure from community members
- State: policies for breastfeeding, daycare centers
- Order of constraints could be different depending on context

Martina: decision of woman who wants to work and get paid

- Household: allocation of time between unpaid and paid work, bargaining can be among other members (not just husband and wife depending on context)
- Market: discrimination, norms about paid work and unpaid responsibilities
- Community: community norms
- State: not having family policies is a constraint
- Order- constraints are so interconnected so it is difficult to order